



Former Northwestern Barrel Superfund Site Questions and Answers About Dioxin

South Milwaukee, Wisconsin

November 1999

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide information about a chemical called dioxin recently found at the Former Northwestern Barrel site.

Was dioxin found at the Former Northwestern Barrel site?

Dioxin was found at the Former Northwestern Barrel site during the time-critical work that was recently completed. It was discovered in a sample of soil that originally came from the ravine on the north side of the site. This ravine soil was contaminated with other chemicals such as PCBs, lead, and solvents. This soil was hauled away as part of the ongoing cleanup work.

What is dioxin?

Dioxin is not just one chemical, but a mixture of chemicals with a similar structure. Dioxins are formed as by-products in the environment and can be associated with wood preservatives, pulp and paper manufacturing, herbicide use, and burning of municipal and some industrial wastes. Because of today's industrial society, it is typical to find dioxin as a trace contaminant in most urban soils.

Dioxin exposure at high levels can cause health problems such as chloracne (severe skin lesions). It may cause liver damage and cancer in high doses. The main way that people can come into contact with dioxin is through eating food (such as meat or fish) that is contaminated with trace amounts of dioxin. Contact can also occur by swallowing polluted soil, drinking polluted water, or breathing polluted air; however, these forms of contact are minor contributors.

I live near the site. Is my health in danger from dioxin?

U.S. EPA believes that people living near the Former Northwestern Barrel site are safe. This is for several reasons:

- Dioxin is common in the environment. The dioxin in the soil sample is within the range of levels found in urban soils.
- The soil sample was taken from the ravine, not your residential area. Contaminated soils have been removed from the site. This includes the soil that contained the dioxin.
- Dioxin found in the soil sample is less than levels that U.S. EPA uses for requiring removal of soils near residential areas.

What happens next?

U.S. EPA is studying all soil samples collected to date and is working with state agencies and the companies conducting the cleanup to develop additional soil sampling plans. These plans will outline the locations for further soil samples as well as specific chemicals to be tested.

U.S. EPA will keep residents informed as the plans are completed and site work progresses.



On-site worker collects soil sample.

How can I get more information?

If you would like more information about the cleanup, please contact:



Bri Bill
Community Involvement Coordinator
U.S. EPA
Office of Public Affairs (P-19J)
77 West Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 353-6646
or toll-free at 1-800-621-8431, ext. 36646



If you have health concerns or questions, please contact:

Chuck Warzecha
Wisconsin Division of Health
Department of Health and Family Services
1414 East Washington Street
Madison, WI 53703
(608) 267-3732

Jackie Ove
Public Health Administration
South Milwaukee Health Department
2424 15th Avenue
South Milwaukee, WI 53172
(414) 764-5060

Files about the site are available for review at:

South Milwaukee Public Library
1907 10th Avenue
South Milwaukee, WI 53172-2003



United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region 5
Office of Public Affairs
77 West Jackson Blvd. (P-19J)
Chicago, IL 60604

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